

In the absence of textual evidences nothing can be of greater value than contemporary paintings for the purpose. More than any amount of words the visual experience acquired through this medium provides us in illustrated form the knowledge of a variety of those things that a chronicler would never even think of as worthy of report. Fortunately, the Mughal emperors maintained a whole establishment of painters and it was under Akbar that special attention was paid. Akbar had an independent views and indeed he considered painting as one of the means to recognise God. From the very beginning the consideration of Mughal painters to the Persian Qalam evidents on the pages of Dastan-i-Amir-Hamjah. The fusion of the Persian and Indian styles may also be seen in the illustrations of the MS. Tutinama, newly discovered by Dr. Sherman Lee. An early dated MS. Diwan of Anwari (A.D. 1588) also combines the styles of Persian and Western Indian-Art.

Under the present study a few selected MSS. - Anwar-i-Suhaili; Akbarnama; Diwan-i-Hafiz; Razmnama, Tarikh-i-Khandian-i-Timuriya and Tuzik-i-Baburi have been taken. Several illuminated copies of these MSS. have survived to this day. The study aims at a more extensive study of the art produced under Akbar. A good deal of work has been done towards the appreciation of the Mughal art recently. Nevertheless the appreciation so far done has been from the artistic point of view. The wealth of the historical and technical data which these miniatures have to offer remains still unexplored. Turning over them one is struck with the persistent uniformity of



of forms and shapes of the articles of use, arms, armours, cultural interest and institutions which analysed and put together enable us to know of the medieval-life more intimately. The illustrations are not wanting in the direct representation of the lives of the common-people. The author has given graphic descriptions of the customs and lives of the people as he happened to observe. The paintings help us to know of the utensils, musical-instruments, technological-gadgets, costumes, arms, armours and ensigns etc. used in those time. These are records <sup>h</sup> which the historian of medieval-society can ill afford to by pass. The present work is an humble step towards this object. The author is aware of its unsatisfactory nature. The limitations are too many and besides he wished to have been able to find excess to more collections.

The work is broadly divided into two parts dealing with the art and technique on the one hand and the historical aspects on the other. The first part concerns much less the aesthetic point of view. As enough has been done in this direction, though appreciation of art is a matter of personal taste and discriminative ability. Attention is therefore paid to the techniques involving in the art of drawing, expension of the Mughal Qalam and its contribution to the Indian art, traces of the synthesis of the Persian, Indian, European and Chinese traditions, perspective, colouring light and shade etc. A separate chapter is devoted to the treatment of themes. The decorative patterns and designing form the subject of an distinct section. The second part is more analytical in character. The different



cloths, garments and other wearables; armours of soldiers and animals; arms; ensigns; musical-instruments; various articles of use viz. different types of drinking glasses, bottles, wine-containers, trays, broths and the kitchen utensils; the implements of gardening and agriculture; tools of a mason and carpenter; means of irrigation; water-transport; road-journey and a few other technological-gadgets etc. have been separately treated and illustrated through sketches.

From the point of view of art the Akbari illustrations are synthesised primarily with the traditions of the Persian and the pre-Mughal Indian arts. The former reveals itself in bright colour-schemes dominated by the Persian blue, crimson, orange, yellow and gold pigments; the superimposition of calligraphed blurbs; in the three-quarter-representation of human faces; in the modulated contours of hills depicted with springing trees, streams and animals shown perched on them; in the drawing of the objects from the bird-eye-view, disposal of a group of human figures on a very horizon line; in the profusely decorated patterns on floor, Shamiyanas, costumes and carpets comprising interlacing work; in the always changing focal point of an artist, figures imposed on one another, trees laden with flowers and in the flat treatment of colours. The latter finds expression in the dynamism and rhythm and crowded animation in the representation of human figures; in the elongated eyes, casually the second eye projecting beyond the



face line; in the straight, long tree-trunk with dense foliage; in the stylised form of leaves; elephant figures and in the wavy-lines of water often shown with fish and lotus flower. Side by side with this, perceptible traces of the naturalism characteristic of the later Mughal art, begin to show up in the depiction of realistic treatment of tree-trunks and animals.

However the technique depends a great deal on standardised forms and stylised features. The predominant character of these paintings draws on the accuracy of lines, the neatness of colouring and standard proportions. The representation of the female figures is everywhere standardised. A certain degree of uniformity persists in the technique, media and conception through out its development. The principle of maximum visibility is faithfully followed as the prime condition of perfect representation. Composition is done in the vertical plane. Distance is depicted either by breaking the part of a theme or by giving them in vertical, ascending order. Casually the distant landscapes and objects in the background are depicted to enhance the effect of depth in the illustration. There is no single direction of light, hence no shadows. The principle of foreshortening is not fully understood. Action is symbolised by gestures of the hands or the head. Emphasis is laid on the brilliancy of colours and the gold dust is lavishly used. The hashvias are generally left plain.

By the Akbar's time the Mughal art had started showing the influence of the European art, the most significant of which was the intro-



duction of European-perspective. But the traces of these remain few and far in between. The features of Chinese art are also not wanting in the Akbari-illustrations.

From the point of view of material - culture the miniatures make a fine source of information. The sartorial habits of the gentry manifest good taste, discreteness and variety. The trend was in favour of covering the maximum part of body. They wore jamās, trousers, turbans or caps and patka etc. Clothes worn in winter-fariī, qaba and gadar etc. have differed in material. As a matter of fact there is observed a great uniformity in the fashions of all classes of people from the aristocracy to the peasant. Royal-attendants had special uniforms. The ladies wore long flowing dresses. Native women however dressed in a long plaited petticoat, a choli or a blouse and a head sheet. The peshwaz was the common wear of the ladies of court. They sported generally oblong caps. It is notable that their costumes are invariably plain. Ornaments were in vogue and worn in profusion.

The soldiers were generally provided with armours which included the maximum number of pieces that could be put on without incurring obstruction in the movements. There were the helmets, zirih, bagtar, chest and back-plates, arm-guards, knee-guards, leg-guards and foot-wears. The helmets could be made with or without hanging mails. Casually, a forehead plate and a visor could also be attached with it. Leg-guards are made in a variety of length. The zirih, bagtar,



dastanwa and leg-guards are common armours of a Mughal-soldier. The animals too were fully equipped with armours. A horse-armour consisted of the qashqah, gardani, chest-guard and urtuk. The pakhar appear the main armour of an elephant.

The sword, bow and arrow, lance and mace are the conventional arms wielded by Mughals. The chief weapon was the shamsheer or a dhup but a soldier was almost invariably equipped with bow and arrows. The takash-kaman was greatly favoured. The soldiers had quivers and bow-cases to hold the arrows and bows respectively. Thirdly comes the spear. The mace was casually wielded. Apart from the conventional arms the artillery used by the Mughals included both cannons and handguns. The latter was still in its primitive stage. It was long, difficult to wield and time consuming and had no folding device in the middle. A few were provided with priming-pan, ramrod and pargaz. Cannons generally rested on two or four wheels. Lastly, the jazail rested on a tripod.

The rubab and chang are the main musical-instruments played for entertainment. Female dancers invariably wielded castanets. The musical-instruments of the native land viz. the veena, tambura and kamancha were also introduced in the Mughal court. The former could become much popular. A whole establishment of musicians was attached to the court in which the naqqarkhana occupied a prominent place. It was accomplished with kettle-drums, pipes and cymbals etc. and



was considered as an ensign of royalty.

The other insignias included mainly the awrang, sayaban, chhatra, kawakaba and the alms- displaying innumerable types of heads including the forms of utensil, lizard, dragon, elephant head and human face etc. The heads of wild goat, stag, tiger, horse, sheep and a dragon employed in the ornamentation have an emblematic significance. The shades viz. scarlet, orange, green and crimson used in the cloth of standards and flags too, are of emblematic significance.

For one thing some of the essential gadgets are very clearly depicted. The crude form of the Persian-wheel with its crown and drum elements is represented rather faithfully. An improvement in the water-work is inferred from the frequent use of large fountains in the gardens and palaces. The stirrup appears to have become common; so does the horse-shoe. An efficient system of water transport is also apparent from the miniatures. There are several types of boats including double-deckers. Some of them are shown with masts and sails. Boats employed for varying purposes - journey or naval engagements etc. are differently shaped. For ladies boats were made with close compartments. Boats were also employed for building a bridge on a river. These were specially made and resembled in shape with the punt of today.

For the road-journey peoples travelled in litters carried by two



or four men. Royal ladies generally travelled in the imaris or in the mihaffa. Traders had camels and oxen to transport ~~an~~ <sup>the</sup> goods. The former was greatly favoured and was also employed by the insignia holders and the musicians of the naggarkhana in the battle-field. The elephant was rarely employed.

Various utensils used in the kitchen for cooking and serving the preparations and for feast etc. included the degchi, qab, large platters, pavalas and a rich variety of bottles viz. surahis and minas and other wine-containers. The utensils used for decoration were the flower-pots, candle-sticks and stands for perfume-pots etc. Grace, decorativeness and symmetry are the chief characteristics of them.

There are many more items which can be studied in greater detail with the help of written sources as it is the miniatures of the illuminated manuscripts along with other collections provide us with a valuable source for the study of Mughal-Culture. In the absence of directly relevant sources the historian can however rely on the pictorial representations of the numerous themes chosen privately or by the order of patrons by artists from time to time. Such a mass of material will include albums prepared in the court, portraiture, independent paintings and, no less important, the illustrations of fictional texts - a task that is very difficult indeed, none the less necessary.

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